4th Warwick Islamic Education Summer School

Pedagogies in Dialogue:
Engaging traditions of human formation in educational cultures of Islam and the West

27-29 August 2019
Convener: Dr Abdullah Sahin
Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick

Warwick Islamic Education Summer Schools

The first *Warwick Islamic Education Summer School*, held in September 2016, marked the formation of a learning community consisting of practitioners and researchers, coming from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, interested in exploring issues related to education, Islam and Muslims within the context of contemporary and historical Muslim societies. In reviving the Muslim educational tradition of *taaruf*, openness to learning from one another, the Summer School offers a collegial academic space within which critical inquiry and reflective practice are encouraged.

During the first gathering, the interdisciplinary nature of Islamic Education and the main challenges facing the field were explored. The discussions have led to the charting of a broad research agenda over which the members could engage with future collaborations. Each annual meeting explores in-depth a specific theme related to the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching and learning of Islam within the contemporary world. In Muslim tradition, all learning starts with the Qur'an. The second Summer School explored the educational character of the Qur'an and its diverse pedagogic appropriations/interpretations within the context of historical Muslim societies and modern world. The third gathering engaged with the gender disparity in education within Muslim minority and majority societies. Issues related to the formation of Muslim female faith and educational leadership were explored.

The goal is to contribute to the generation of a new transformative Muslim culture of learning and reflective inquiry through rethinking Islamic Education within the context of a secular and culturally, religiously diverse Western Europe and the wider Muslim world. Education is a critical catalyst for facilitating effective civic engagement, social welfare and economic prosperity. As such a further central objective is to improve the quality of educational thinking and pedagogic practice within the diaspora and global Muslim communities.

The Summer School has led to the establishment of the *Warwick Islamic Education Research Network* that has over two hundred members and encourages cross disciplinary exploration of Islam/Education intersection within diverse Muslim minority/majority contexts. The *Network* facilitates critical dialogue between the educational narratives of Islam and the West through fostering collaborative research and transfer of knowledge and skills among diverse groups of Muslim educators and the wider community of researchers, practitioners and policy-makers in Education, Social Sciences and the Humanities.

The Fourth Islamic Education Summer School: *educational & pedagogic context*

Education, in its broadest sense, can be defined as a complex process facilitating the art of becoming a human being. Educational readiness is an integral part of human biological and psychological make up: human ontogenesis, through communicative, contextual activities of learning and teaching, a distinctive set of culturally framed pedagogic practices, gives rise to a human-specific psychology. A unique personal agency appears to form out of embodied, individual interpretations and participation in a cultural milieu of shared experiences, knowledge, skills and values. Education, in short, acts as a central mediator connecting human biological givenness and collectively constructed symbols and values of a cultural ecology. This, in turn, enables the diverse articulations of being human in the world to emerge. Societies gradually develop distinctive educational cultures and pedagogic practices crucial for maintaining and rearticulating their core narratives of being human across the generations.

Educational cultures have always remained within a certain degree of dialogue and exchange due to both peaceful and sometimes conflictual historical encounters among humanity's diverse nations, races and faith traditions. This has often resulted in the assimilation and domination of the 'other' but has also created opportunities for cross-pollination of ideas and experiences that have inspired creative civilizational expressions of humanity. At the dawn of a new millennium, humanity is experiencing an unpresented level of cross-cultural and religious encounters that bring diverse educational cultures to share the same physical and social space. Among the key dynamics facilitating this new multifaceted condition of human interaction and plurality are increasing levels of global migration and the growing impact of the digital revolution on human life. The socio-political and economic implications of the former, in particular, appears to have lately triggered an alarming reactionary attitude towards 'difference' in the West. Finding meaningful and just ways of recognizing and addressing this unpresented condition of cultural, ethnic and religious plurality remains a central challenge facing 21st century societies.

What appears to be urgently needed is the creation of an inclusive, transformative educational culture and pedagogic practice capable of accommodating diversity of values and traditions. Such an inclusive pedagogy can resource and inspire communities to engage actively in the formation of a new dignified peaceful coexistence. Recognizing communities' educational traditions, which house their legacies of wisdom, and bringing them into a creative dialogue with dominant contemporary Western secular education, help foster values of mutual trust and a shared sense of belonging. Through such an inclusive and transformative intercultural pedagogy, a degree of critical self-reflection among all communities and the values of a contextual, relational ethics of living with one another can be nurtured.

The Fourth Islamic Education Summer School: Islamic Education context

The educational and pedagogic heritage of faith communities can often be dismissed as incompatible with modern secular education. Minority faith communities, on the other hand, faced with threat of assimilation and the marginalization of their pedagogic heritage, might discard the value of secular liberal education all together. Such a binary incompatibility is often assumed to exist between Islamic and Western secular pedagogies. The current reactionary wave of nationalist populism and the rise of far-right politics, Islamophobia across most of the Western world, shows an irrational fear of difference and threatens the values of Western liberal secular democracy. Within a highly sensitive political context, an open and responsible dialogue between Islamic and Western pedagogic cultures has been replaced by the urge for an authoritarian instruction which inculcates a deceptive sense of self-sufficiency, and territorial, cultural, racial and religious 'purity' and superiority that needs to be defended against what is perceived to be a contaminating 'other'.

The social function of education needs to be critically analysed through recognition of intersecting dynamics such as gender, social class, politics, religion and ethnicity. There is sociological rationale behind the need for facilitating a reflective dialogue between Islamic and Western ideas and cultures of education. The life-world of young generations of Muslims has been informed by both Islamic parental heritage, including traditional Islamic Education gained in the mosque, *madrassa*, as well as the wider secular culture through mainstream education. How young Muslims develop their sense of belonging and agency within such a demanding cultural reality needs careful consideration by the community and wider society. Often, educators dismiss traditional Islamic Education as mere rote learning, a narrow religious nurture and indoctrination. Similarly, some Muslims construe secular education as anti-religious, materialistic and colonial; a threat to their identity and values of their youngsters. This appears to have led to the emergence of a large Islamic schooling movement, parents increasingly opting for home

schooling and the rise of educational activism within the community seeking to protect rights of Muslim children in the mainstream schools. At further and higher education level, Muslims have set up Islamic seminaries where an undiluted form of traditional Islamic higher learning is claimed to be offered. Muslim children and young people can end up going through a parallel educational system and face a real challenge in meeting their conflicting expectations and in integrating the diversity in their life experiences.

The education space can become contentious within increinsgly muscular (neo) liberal politics as illustrated by the following recent events: the infamous Trojan Horse Affair in Birmingham where an elaborate scheme of Islamisition of mainstream schools is alleged to have been targeted by Muslim parents, the ongoing objections of Muslim parents to LGBT lessons being taught to young children and a highly concerning Prevent policy in the schools mainly targeting Muslim children. None-confessional teaching of Islam in inclusive RE has often been criticized by Muslim parents too. The controversies over the teaching of Islamic Studies in secular universities where often critical, historical textual methodologies dominate, which can be seen as undermining Islam i.e. reducing the embodied, living Islam to a reified historical/textual relic of scholarly interest. On the other hand, it is often assumed that the sacred content of teaching and learning in Islam means that the approaches to teaching and learning, for example, the Qur'an, are also sacred and therefore need to be confessional and ritually performed acts of devotion rather than reflective engagement and exploration. There is a 'pedagogic gap' between Islamic and Western education practice and perception that need to addressed.

The Fourth Islamic Education Summer School: focus, themes and structure

This year's Summer School aims to explore traditions of education in Islam and the West, examining their historical encounters and contemporary issues hindering their engagement with the view to generating a new critical dialogue between Islamic and Western pedagogies. The focus will be on exploring the nature and characteristics of classical Islamic pedagogy, its role in the formation of Muslim theological, scientific, philosophical, poetic and spiritual traditions. The significant role of critical, prophetic pedagogy, utilised in the Muslim sacred discourse, in transforming the cumulative human heritage in Late Antiquity into a polyvalent, synthetic yet distinctively 'Islamic episteme' and imagination will be analysed. The impact of Indian, Persian and particularly ancient Greek pedagogic ideas in shaping the epistemic space and ethics in classic Muslim educational thought, that is often expressed with the concept of 'adab', equivalent of Greek 'paideia', will be discussed. Distinctive Biblical accounts of 'human formation and flourishing' have clear resemblance with Islamic 'tarbiyah', Islam's vision of becoming a mature human being (*alinsan alkamil*), will be critically compared. The degree to which these faith-embedded models clash with human autonomy and agency-focused humanistic pedagogies, grounded in the narrative of Western secular modernity, will be examined. The link between 'pedagogic creativity and educational reform' in facilitating positive social change in Muslim minority and majority societies will also be explored.

Through consultation with the participants, some of the following broad interrelated themes and questions will be prioritised for an in-depth exploration:

- What is Islamic pedagogy? A conceptual exploration;
- Islamic and Western secular, liberal pedagogies: convergence or divergence? ;
- Scholarship and scholarly communities in medieval Muslim societies and their pedagogic practices;
- Pedagogy as coercive practices of disciplining (*ta'dib*): politics of piety in public education in medieval and contemporary Muslim societies;
- Teaching Islam through storytelling and performing arts;
- Muslim spiritual pedagogies and human psychospiritual development;
- Liturgical pedagogies: oral literacy, rhetoric and homiletics in Muslim educational tradition;
- What can secular education learn from wisdom traditions in Islam and world religions? ;
- 'Text, teacher and memorization-cantered pedagogy' and 'critical and reflective learner-lead pedagogies in *madrassa*, Islamic schooling and *dar al-uluums*;
- Teaching Islam through controversial issues: 'jihad, religious extremism, gender inequality, human rights, interpretative pluralism and truth claims, salvation';
- Models of facilitating Islamic literacy in inclusive RE and wider secular curriculum;
- Teaching about diversity in Islam, Muslim communities and cultural and religious plurality in modern Muslim world;

- Hermeneutics and pedagogy: teaching Qur'an through inter/intra textual conversations with the Bible and other sacred texts;
- Phenomenological Pedagogy: teaching Islam through the lived experiences of children and young people: *embodied literacy, religiosity and character development*;
- Islamic pedagogy as transformative empowerment: gender disparity in the organization and delivery of education in formal and informal Muslim educational settings of *mosque, madrassa and dar al-uluum*;
- Facilitating public understanding of Islam and Muslims in the West and Muslim understanding of contemporary secular culture and religious diversity;
- Resourcing Muslim educators with transferrable reflective pedagogic competence;
- Reflecting pedagogic principles in curriculum design and assessment procedures in traditional Muslim seminaries;
- Online pedagogies and augmented realities: examining the positive and negative impact of e-teaching /learning environments in Islamic Education on learner's agency;
- Pedagogic discourse and reproduction of religious identities among transnational Muslim religious networks;
- Developing benchmarks for pedagogic practice and qualification frameworks for contemporary Muslim Higher Education Institutions;
- Designing cross-disciplinary research projects exploring Islam/Education intersection within diverse Muslim minority/majority settings;
- Engaging with contemporary pedagogic theories and assess/develop pedagogic models through social and educational research i.e. Action Research, Ethnography etc.

There will be opportunities for networking and special sessions for researchers and practitioners to present their work. The aim is to facilitate a cross-fertilization of ideas and to share the best practice among the emerging inter-disciplinary community of researchers, practitioners and policy-makers. Participants will be supported in formulating and discussing their research interests and will receive peer support and an opportunity to interact with experts in the field.

The Summer School is open to all researchers and educators who are interested in developing their understanding of the educational culture and practice in teaching within Muslim communities and their interaction with wider social and educational institutions.

The programme will be delivered through interactive workshops, lectures and presentations.

Participants are welcome to share aspects of their ongoing research and relevant teaching practice during the Summer School. Those who wish to make a contribution need to submit a 500 word abstract by **31 July 2019.** Please e-mail your abstract to **a.sahin@warwick.ac.uk**

Participants will also have the opportunity to learn more about the Islamic Education initiative at Warwick, research expertise within WRERU, and the wider research and taught programmes at the Centre for Educational Studies at the University of Warwick.

Cost: £275 including accommodation and food. £100 excluding accommodation.

Please register your interest here
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ces/research/conferences/islamiceducationsummerschool